

Amendments to the Claims:

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) An exposure method for exposing one of a first object and a second object with an exposure light beam passing through the other of the first object and the second object by using an exposure apparatus provided with an airtight stage chamber in which a movable stage is provided, the exposure method comprising:

importing the second object into the airtight stage chamber, wherein an inner wall of a member which forms the airtight stage chamber is formed of or coated with a material involving little gas release;

detecting, before the second object is installed on the movable stage, a position of the second object with respect to the movable stage by using a detecting system provided in the airtight stage chamber;

adjusting the position of the second object with respect to the movable stage in the airtight stage chamber based on a result of the detecting;

installing, on the movable stage, the second object which has been adjusted;

moving the movable stage to adjust the position of the second object with respect to an exposure position; and

exposing one of the first object and the second object with the exposure light beam passing through the other of the first object and the second object.

2. (Currently Amended) The exposure method according to claim 1, wherein:
the step of importing the second object into the airtight stage chamber is performed by the exposure apparatus includes a transport system which imports the second object into the airtight stage chamber of the exposure apparatus, and the transport system

being accommodated in an airtight transport chamber which accommodates the transport system of the exposure apparatus; and further comprising:

substantially isolating a space between the airtight stage chamber and the airtight transport chamber is substantially isolated from outside air;

supplying a gas, through which the exposure light beam is transmitted, is supplied into the airtight stage chamber and the airtight transport chamber; and

management is made managing the supply of the gas so that an allowable value of a concentration of an impurity in the gas is higher in the airtight transport chamber than in the airtight stage chamber.

3. (Previously Presented) The exposure method according to claim 1, wherein:

the exposure apparatus includes another movable stage which is different from the movable stage, and another airtight stage chamber which is different from the airtight stage chamber and which accommodates the another stage; and

the exposure method further comprises importing the first object into the another airtight stage chamber; adjusting a position of the first object with respect to the another movable stage in the another airtight stage chamber; installing, on the another movable stage, the first object which position has been adjusted; and moving the another movable stage to adjust the position of the first object with respect to the exposure position.

4. (Previously Presented) The exposure method according to claim 1, wherein the airtight stage chamber and the movable stage of the exposure apparatus are incorporated into the exposure apparatus in accordance with a module system.

5. (Original) The exposure method according to claim 1, wherein the first object is a mask on which a pattern is formed, and the second object is a substrate to which an image of the pattern is transferred.

6. (Currently Amended) An exposure method for exposing one of a first object and a second object with an exposure light beam passing through the other of the first object and the second object, the exposure method comprising:

transporting the second object to a movable stage by the aid of a transport system;

adjusting a position of the second object with respect to the transport system on a contour basis in an airtight chamber in which the transport system is located during the transport of the second object to the movable stage by the aid of the transport system, wherein an inner wall of a member which forms the airtight chamber is formed of or coated with a material involving little gas release; ~~and~~

transporting the second object, of which position has been adjusted in the airtight chamber, to the movable stage through a space in which air-tightness is maintained;
and

exposing one of the first object and the second object transported to the movable stage with the exposure light beam passing through the other of the first object and the second object.

7. (Original) The exposure method according to claim 6, further comprising adjusting a position of the second object with respect to the movable stage to place the second object on the movable stage after the positional adjustment with respect to the transport system; and adjusting of the second object placed on the movable stage with respect to the exposure light beam on the basis of a positional adjustment mark formed on the second object.

8. (Original) The exposure method according to claim 7, wherein the positional adjustment for the second object with respect to the transport system or the movable stage is performed on a contour basis of the second object.

9. (Original) The exposure method according to claim 6, wherein the first object is a mask formed with a pattern, the second object is a photosensitive substrate to which the pattern is transferred, and temperature adjustment is performed for the second object during a period between the positional adjustment for the second object with respect to the transport system and positional adjustment for the second object with respect to the movable stage.

10. (Original) The exposure method according to claim 6, wherein the movable stage is incorporated into an exposure apparatus in accordance with a module system.

11. - 22. (Cancelled)

23. (Currently Amended) An exposure apparatus for exposing one of a first object and a second object with an exposure light beam passing through the other of the first object and the second object, the exposure apparatus comprising:

a movable stage which adjusts a position of the second object; and

a transport system which is arranged in an airtight transport chamber, an inner wall of which is formed of or coated with a material involving little gas release, and which transports the second object ~~entirely~~ to the movable stage through a space in which air-tightness is maintained, wherein the transport system includes:

a handling mechanism which has two or more degrees of freedom of displacement for incorporating the second object from the outside;

a contour-detecting system which detects position information on a contour of the second object held by the handling mechanism; and

an arm mechanism which has at least one degree of freedom of displacement for transporting the second object delivered from the handling mechanism in a direction toward the movable stage.

24. (Original) The exposure apparatus according to claim 23, wherein:

the handling mechanism includes a rotary stand, a first hand which is rotatably fixed on the rotary stand, and a second hand which is rotatably provided at a tip of the first hand and which has its tip at which the second object is held; and

the arm mechanism includes an arm which holds the second object, and a driving unit which drives the arm in a direction toward the movable stage.

25. (Original) The exposure apparatus according to claim 23, further comprising a temperature control system which adjusts temperature of the second object delivered from the handling mechanism.

26. (Previously Presented) The exposure apparatus according to claim 23, further comprising:

an airtight stage chamber which is included in the airtight transport chamber and which accommodates the movable stage;

an airtight first transport chamber which accommodates the handling mechanism; and

an airtight second transport chamber which accommodates the arm mechanism, wherein:

closable openings are formed respectively between the airtight second transport chamber and the airtight stage chamber, between the airtight first transport chamber and a transport line for the second object, and between the airtight first transport chamber and the airtight second transport chamber.

27. (Previously Presented) The exposure apparatus according to claim 26, wherein the opening formed between the airtight second transport chamber and the airtight stage chamber is smaller than the opening formed between the airtight first transport chamber and the airtight second transport chamber.

28. (Previously Presented) The exposure apparatus according to claim 26, further comprising, in the airtight second transport chamber, a temperature control unit which adjusts temperature of the second object.

29. (Original) The exposure apparatus according to claim 23, wherein the movable stage is incorporated into the exposure apparatus in accordance with a module system.

30. - 52. (Cancelled)

53. (Original) A method for producing a device, comprising a step of transferring a mask pattern onto a workpiece by using the exposure method as defined in claim 1.

54. (Original) A method for producing a device, comprising a step of transferring a mask pattern onto a workpiece by using the exposure method as defined in claim 6.

55. (Cancelled)

56. (Currently Amended) An exposure method for exposing a substrate with an exposure light beam by using an exposure apparatus provided with an airtight stage chamber in which a movable stage is provided, the exposure method comprising:

importing the substrate into the airtight stage chamber, wherein an inner wall of a member which forms the airtight stage chamber is formed of or coated with a material involving little gas release;

detecting, before the substrate is installed on the movable stage, a position of the substrate with respect to the movable stage by using a detecting system provided in the airtight stage chamber;

adjusting the position of the substrate with respect to the movable stage in the airtight stage chamber based on a result of the detecting;

installing, on the movable stage, the substrate which has been adjusted;

moving the movable stage to adjust the position of the substrate with respect to an exposure position; and

exposing the substrate with the exposure light beam.

57. (Currently Amended) An exposure method for exposing a substrate with an exposure light beam, the exposure method comprising:

transporting the substrate to a movable stage by the aid of a transport system;

adjusting a position of the substrate with respect to the transport system on a contour basis in an airtight chamber in which the transport system is located during the transport of the substrate to the movable stage by the aid of the transport system, wherein an inner wall of a member which forms the airtight chamber is formed of or coated with a material involving little gas release; and

transporting the substrate, of which position has been adjusted in the airtight chamber, to the movable stage through a space in which air-tightness is maintained; and

exposing the substrate transported to the movable stage with the exposure light beam.

58. (Currently Amended) An exposure apparatus for exposing a substrate with an exposure light beam, the exposure apparatus comprising:

a movable stage which adjusts a position of the substrate; and

a transport system which is arranged in an airtight transport chamber, an inner wall of which is formed of or coated with a material involving little gas release, and which transports the substrate ~~entirely~~ to the movable stage through a space in which air-tightness is maintained, wherein the transport system includes:

a handling mechanism which has two or more degrees of freedom of displacement for incorporating the substrate from the outside;

a contour-detecting system which detects position information on a contour of the substrate held by the handling mechanism; and

an arm mechanism which has at least one degree of freedom of displacement for transporting the substrate delivered from the handling mechanism in a direction toward the movable stage.